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THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE.



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BY THE AUTHOR OF

'THOUGHTS ON THE CHURCH CATECHISM.'

'He that giveth Alms sacrificeth Praise.'—**ECCLUS. xxxv. 2.**

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THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE.

No one can read with attention the minute directions given to the Israelites, respecting their daily and yearly sacrifices, without learning from this minuteness, that the Lord of all the earth designed that perfection should be our aim in all which we either offer, or purpose to offer, to His Divine Majesty.

Whatever was the object of any of the Jewish Sacrifices, whether it were atonement for sin, or thankfulness for benefits received—perfection in its kind was essential in the thing offered. Leaven was not permitted to be mixed with the ‘fine flour’ and oil and honey, which formed ‘the thank-offering unto the Lord, (*Lev. ii. 11.*) because the idea of decay and corruption was connected with it; and thus are we taught that the Most High requires that all our sacrifices to Him should be thoroughly imbued with the ‘unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.’

Three kinds of sacrifices were of old ordained by the Law, each specified with much distinctness and solemnity. First, the Sin-offering; second, the Burnt-offering; third, the Thank-offering. We, as

Christians, see in these sacrifices the type of the one Great Atonement, made in after ages for the sins of the whole world ; but the Gospel also points to them as symbolical in a *secondary* sense of certain duties, incumbent alike upon Israelite and Christian.

A learned Divine of our Church thus explains their meaning—‘First, the duty of confession of sin ; second, the detestation of sin, accompanied with a *burning* desire for holiness of life, and continual prayer for Grace in order to attain it ; and thirdly, continual thanksgiving to our GOD for mercies received.’

It is to the last of these, the Thank-offering, that we will now direct our attention. Let me remind you that before we can duly answer the question, which the ‘man after GOD’s own heart’ has put into our mouths—‘What shall I render unto the Lord, for all the benefits which He hath done unto me ?’ it will be necessary for us to consider both the import and the duty of Thanksgiving ; that we may with the more certainty offer with unfeigned hearts a pure and unadulterated sacrifice.

It consists of four things. First, it enjoins confession that all the good we possess comes from Almighty GOD, and proceeds not from our own acquiring.

Many things we have which we have not prayed for ; and many things have been vouchsafed in answer to our prayers ; each call for a thankful heart.

The blessings which we have are not ours ; they spring not from us, but have been given to us. Do we need a proof of this ? Surely it is plainly seen

by the knowledge that all the possessions we so much value, may, and do oftentimes, ‘take to themselves wings and fly away;’ and this without warning, and in spite of all our precautions—simply because it is the Will of GOD that so it should be.

Thanksgiving, then, should precede and follow all our prayers.

Contentment is another portion of thanksgiving; indeed, it is in its very nature a thank-offering to the LORD.

Discontent implies a feeling of want, and at the same time vexation of spirit that these real or imaginary necessities are not satisfied. But the Christian quenches these cravings of the natural man, by the duty which he feels to be at all times, and under all circumstances, incumbent on him—namely, the duty of glorifying his GOD. For this end he was created; and until it is attained, he is unworthy of the name which he bears. Let him then learn, like the Apostle St. Paul, ‘in whatsoever state of life he be, therewith to be content.’

Learn he must; for this is not a duty which unsanctified nature can of itself perform; but let us with all reverence pray, as our Blessed Lord did in the days of His earthly sojourning, ‘Father, glorify Thy Name;’ and we shall be taught both *how* to abound, and *how* to suffer need, so that in abundance we shall not be puffed up with an over-estimation of our superiority or deserts, neither in difficulty shall we be cast down; but keeping the golden mean of thankful duty constantly before us, we shall be enabled to show forth GOD’s glory, both in the

recesses of our own hearts, as well as to manifest it to others, by our lives and actions.

This brings us to the next portion of Thanksgiving. Our lips will not be silent. We shall be ready on all fitting occasions to tell of the loving-kindness of the **LORD**. The heart which is sensible of mercies received, cannot but desire to pour forth its gratitude in Praise.

‘I will give thanks unto the **LORD** with my whole heart, secretly among the faithful, and in the congregation.’ (*Psalm cxi. 1.*)

And here let us distinguish between the duty of Thanksgiving and the duty of Praise. In the first, we thank our merciful **GOD** for what He has given *us*, or done for *us*; and it is a most essential part of our worship which no one can lack leisure to perform, and for the neglect of which no excuse can be offered. But in Praise, all thoughts of *self* vanish from the mind; and our hearts are fixed on the Mighty **GOD** in His Own glorious excellencies and perfections. ‘O Praise **GOD** in His Holiness; praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him in His noble acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness.’ (*Psalm cl.*) It is for these attributes that ‘every thing that hath breath doth praise the **LORD**’.

This is Adoration; and in it, and by it, our hearts vibrate to the same strings which are struck by the dwellers in Paradise, and by the Angelic Choir in that land where ‘every thought is melody, and every movement praise.’

Having by these considerations shown wherein

the *purity* of the Thank-offering consists; we can now proceed to the subject of the sacrifice itself.

Many are the sacrifices which a truly thankful heart can offer; indeed, every faculty which we possess, whether of spirit or of mind, every power of our body, and every gift of our soul, may be rendered by its rightful use a thank-offering to Him Who has bestowed it. But there is one thing which is, in its nature, of the earth, earthy; but which may be hallowed by its dedication to the furtherance of GOD's Glory on the earth.

I allude to the riches of this world—the gold and the silver which we possess, some of us in large measure, some in small; but which all can sanctify, by bestowing a portion of it in Alms.

It may seem hardly necessary to enlarge upon this point, as it is one for which 'old England' may justly claim respect from the nations of the earth.

The bounteousness with which her charitable institutions are endowed, and the long list of these Charities throughout the land, cannot be acknowledged without a just pride in the nobleness of her liberality. Ancient foundations still exist, to speak of the fine sense of duty which led those who had prospered in their worldly callings to dedicate a portion of their wealth to the benefit of their more needy brethren, as a thank-offering to their GOD. And again, we may notice in the present day, the long lists of contributors who literally *pour* their benefactions forth, whenever even a temporary distress is brought before the public mind; while at the same time there is scarcely a disease to which

human nature is subject, or a distress which may casually assail it, but it is aided by some charitable fund or some permanent institution.

Still, is not the mark which distinguishes the present age that which is best expressed by the word Luxuriousness ? The progress of science, and the skill of the designer and the mechanic, have produced not only an increase in the requisites for home comforts, but also every temptation is placed before us, to indulge in the purchase of those elegancies which afford so much pleasure to the eye of refinement, and display at the same time the riches of those, who it may be, have added them to their possessions merely to increase their apparent importance in the eyes of the world.

There is in the present day, a strong desire in all to rise above the standard which our fathers deemed necessary for due respect, in that state of life in which they were placed ; and to a certain extent this is praiseworthy, but with it comes the temptation to exalt *self* unduly. Our own possessions are first thought of, our own appearance in the eyes of the world ; and anything which advances these objects comes to be regarded as an *essential*. No matter if expense be incurred here, what the ‘heart lusteth for’ is provided—but then, what is left for the claims of others ?

When called upon to give, we bestow perhaps some petty sum, or it may be again indulge ourselves with contributing some trifles towards the sale of more luxuries, or in the purchase of others, (confessing thereby that we do not, and will not, give

for the sake of Christian love;) and then call this multiplying of our pleasures Christian charity.

Let us beware lest we so fence ourselves round with self-indulgence, that the refreshing and sanctifying breath of Heavenly Love cannot reach our hearts.

Yet again, generous natures may rise superior to these fancied claims of society; they may give and give freely; for the pleasure of bestowing is to them greater than the receiving of benefits. Their temptation is, it may be, the indulgence of self-gratification at the expense of justice. The claims of home and of society may be set aside; the feelings of those who look to them for comfort may be hurt. Here again self rules in the heart, and becomes the prolific parent of many errors.

Surely then some rule is necessary, whereby the apparently conflicting duties of spending for our own benefit, and giving for that of others, may be rightly adjusted.

This rule will be found by our considering *whence* it is that our riches flow. And in this consideration the words of good Bishop Andrewes may well assist us. They are these, ‘All rich men must confess, first, That which I have, I have it of the free gift and mercy of GOD; second, I have it not for myself alone, but there is a rent to be paid, both to the Church and to the poor brethren; third, I may not detain this rent, but I am tied unto it of duty by GOD’s command.’

And in illustration of the truth of these assertions, the Bishop draws attention to the twenty-sixth

chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy; where we find a detailed account of the homage which every Israelite, on his attainment of possessions in the Land of Canaan, paid to the **LORD**, as an acknowledgement that all which he received was His gift.

‘Every man cometh with his basket, containing his rent or offering, (*verse 2.*) and bringeth it to the Priest; (*verse 3.*) and the Priest setteth down the basket before the **LORD**; (*verse 4.*) and then the man acknowledges, first, that there is nothing in him or his progenitors that **GOD** should deal so liberally with him or with them, and therefore is he come to do Him homage. (*verses 5–11.*) Secondly, that he brought it out of his substance, and that he gives it to ecclesiastical uses, *i. e.* to the use of the Priest and the Levites; and to civil uses, *i. e.* to the strangers, the fatherless, and to the widow. (*verse 13.*) Thirdly, he acknowledges that he has not done this of his own accord, but by necessity of duty; ‘according to all Thy commandments which Thou hast commanded me.’ (*verse 13.*)

We must notice especially, that this practice was not left to the choice of individuals; but that the first-fruits were to be presented as a holy offering unto the **LORD**, and were not to be esteemed as a man’s own possession. ‘All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the **LORD’S**; it is holy unto the **LORD**.’ (*Lev. xxvii. 30.*) Even the Levites, who were themselves supported by the tithe offerings of the land, were equally bound to present their tithes to the **LORD**. (*Num. xviii. 29.*)

Of great significance also are some words of the ancient Prophets, denouncing the Almighty's wrath upon His people for their neglect of due tithes and offerings. The Prophet Haggai, when he would stir up the people to rebuild the House of the LORD, which duty had been neglected, although their own habitations had been repaired since the Captivity, urges it thus, 'Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this House lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.' (*Haggai*, i. 4-6.)

And again in Malachi iii. the words of wrath are still more forcible; the sin of sacrilege, in withholding the tithes, is pronounced as the crime of robbery. 'Will a man rob GOD? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.' (*verse 8.*)

But with these denunciations every encouragement is given for the performance of the duty, by the distinct promise that blessings shall fall upon the land on the return of its inhabitants to the due sense of their obligations on this matter. 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine House, and prove Me now herewith, saith the LORD of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.'

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground ; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of Hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed : for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of Hosts.' (*Malachi*, iii. 10-13.)

Truly then has it been said, that 'we cannot have any *adequate* notion of charity until we have realized, as a habit of the mind, that nothing that we have is ours—that we are *stewards, not lords, of it*—that week by week, and day by day, we hold it of Him—that we are to give an account of it, coin by coin, all we waste, misuse, spend in luxury or on self—that to hoard it is to heap up fire : to spend it upon *self* is to lose it; to aggrandize ourselves by it is to sink ourselves in God's sight; but to give it largely, denying self, is to lay up treasure with Almighty God.'

Giving to the poor, we are told, is like the sowing of seed. If a man keep his seed in his barn, he will lose it from the force of natural decay ; but if he scatter it abroad it will produce more, and he will be the gainer in the end.

But he must believe in that he seeth not ; he must 'cast his bread upon the waters, and he will find it after many days.' (*Eccles.* xi. 1.) The husbandman trusts his seed in the furrows ; and although he knows that it must decay and become apparently of no value, yet showers and sunshine, winter cold and summer heat, will advance its produce, and a rich harvest will be his reward. So the temporal blessings of GOD are to be considered by us as seed, which

must be scattered abroad and given to the poor—given with the best judgment we possess, and then leave the issue in GOD'S Hands; *He* will bless the increase of that which is bestowed ‘not grudgingly, or of necessity, for He loveth a cheerful giver.’

And as when a man has sown his field, we do not say that the produce is the property of the ground, but that it belongs to him who sowed the seed; so riches, when bestowed, are not the property of the receiver alone, but they are, as Holy Scripture tells us, ‘lent unto the LORD.’ Moreover, it is graciously declared, that what is thus laid out, ‘it shall be paid unto him again,’—not with this world’s goods, but with the treasures of Heaven. ‘Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.’ (*St. Luke*, xii. 33.)

So great is the encouragement given for the performance of this duty.

We have regarded Almsgiving hitherto as an injunction incumbent upon GOD’S chosen people; some then may say, ‘Surely the Jewish Law is not binding upon Christian men.’

Without entering into this question, or proving that ‘the Law is the Gospel under veil,’ and ‘the Gospel is the Law unveiled,’ it will be well for us to examine whether the New Testament sets forth any precepts on this bounden duty of the ancient Church. And this, we shall find, *is* done with great distinctness.

In our Blessed LORD’S Sermon on the Mount, He

devotes some portion to express directions as to the spirit in which our Alms should be given, and connects this duty with those of Prayer and Fasting, as being respectively the dedication of our Substance, of our Souls and of our Bodies, to GOD ; assuming each of these as already known and admitted, and dwelling only on the *spirit* in which each should be performed. Also, He greatly commended the poor widow who cast into the treasury ‘all that she had, even all her living.’ (*St. Mark*, xii. 44.)

And again, there is the direct command, ‘Give alms of such things as ye have ;’ (*St. Luke*, xi. 41.) and the injunction to him who earnestly demanded, ‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? One thing thou lackest : sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven.’ (*St. Mark*, x. 21.)

And then our LORD, in His ever merciful loving-kindness, sheds upon the performance of the duty the honour and the blessing vouchsafed in these words, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ (*St. Matt.* xxv. 40.)

Such precepts as these, from the Great Head of the Church, sufficiently indicate that Almsgiving is not only a duty which is binding upon Christians, but that it should be considered also as a privilege.

It remains now but for us to consider how we should so apportion our possessions, that we may rightly conform our practice with that careful watchfulness taught by St. Paul, when, in speaking

of the temptations of this present world, (*Titus*, ii. 12.) he directs us to live ‘soberly’ towards ourselves, ‘righteously’ or justly towards our neighbours, and ‘godly’ or piously towards GOD. ‘There is then,’ observes Bishop Andrewes, ‘a threefold provision to be made. First, the necessities of food and raiment, house and household, must be cared for; in these we can show “sobriety,” by avoiding undue extravagance. Secondly, the necessities of those dependent upon us must not be forgotten, or justice to others will be neglected. Thirdly, from all which remains after these claims upon us are discharged, and which is our own to spend as we please, a certain portion should be set aside for holy uses; and thus shall we fulfil the Apostle’s precept, and live piously towards GOD.’

What should this portion be? Does Holy Scripture guide us in this matter, or is it left to the inclination of each individual? Happily for us it is not.

The *tenth* of all our increase is distinctly named in GOD’s Word as the portion which is due unto the LORD. And that this portion was so dedicated, even before the stringent laws on the subject were given to the Israelites, we may learn from the example of Abraham and Isaac in the Patriarchal times, each of whom devoted a tenth of their possession to the LORD. The former, when met by Melchizedek, the Priest of the most High GOD, on his return from his victory over the four kings, ‘gave him tithes of all.’ ‘This was a transient interview, when there was no time or opportunity for that counsel and consideration

which is requisite for making a new institution; therefore, it seems clearly to have been practised by him as a long-established custom, and the style and phrase of the sacred text plainly speaks of it as such.' (*Gen. xiv. 20.*) And Jacob, immediately after his vow of having the **LORD** for his **GOD**, subjoined also his resolution of paying Him the tithe of all his increase, *i. e.*, of all that **GOD** should give unto him. 'Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.' (*Gen. xxviii. 22.*)

'This appears a very convincing argument, that the worship of **GOD**, and the payment of tithes, were things which, even in those times, did always go together.'

Also, 'the custom of paying tithes, or offering a tenth of what a man enjoys, or of what he reaps, has not only been practised under the old and new dispensation, but had something like it among the heathens.

'Xenophon, in the fifth book of the *Expedition of Cyrus*, gives us an inscription upon a column near the Temple of Diana, by which the people were warned to offer the tenth part of their revenues every year to that goddess. The Babylonians and Egyptians gave their kings a tenth of their revenues. The Romans exacted of the Sicilians a tenth of the corn they reaped; and those who broke up or tilled any new grounds, were obliged to carry a tenth of their produce to the treasury. The Romans offered a tenth of all they took from their enemies to the gods; the Gauls, in like manner, gave a tenth to their god Mars.' We also read of the same custom

amongst the Syrians, Phœnicians, Arabians, and Ethiopians.

‘There is no rational account to be given how so many different people, of various languages and various customs, and who also worshipped various deities, should all come to agree so exactly in this one matter; but that it was an ancient institution, *sacredly* observed by the first fathers of mankind, and, after the Flood, transmitted by them in a lasting tradition to the nations descended from them. And if so, then we have not only the practice of Abraham and Jacob for the separating of a tenth part of their increase for the support of GOD’s worship, but also that of the ancient Patriarchs, who went before them. And this, I think, fully proves it to be of Divine origin; for those holy men, having as yet no other standing law given unto them but that law of nature which GOD at first wrote in the heart of man at his creation, were under the conduct of special Divine direction for whatever they did in the duties of religion beyond this. And there being nothing in the nature of the thing, nothing in the reason of man, to determine them to a *tenth* part rather than to a ninth, or any other part, and therefore nothing in the law of nature to oblige them to the payment of it; from whence else could it come but from a like Divine direction, that they first fixed on this rule, and afterwards so *sacredly* observed it, and so carefully transmitted it to the nations descended from them?’ *

And as regards the ordinance of the Gospel, it is

* Dean Prideaux.

evident that our Saviour never did expressly repeal the law of the tithes. Indeed, we have strong intimations that He confirmed them. We have the strict payment of tithes mentioned as amongst the just and righteous acts of the Pharisees, (*St. Matt. xxiii. 23.*) and we are told that our righteousness must exceed theirs. We have an express command for Christians to give their Pastors some portion of their goods—‘Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things;’ (*Gal. vi. 6.*) and an order made by the LORD that His Ministers should be provided for as well, and with a like maintenance, which He had before ordained for the Priests and Levites under the Law—‘Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the Temple? and they which wait at the Altar are partakers with the Altar? *Even so* hath the LORD ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.’ (*1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.*)

Notice these words, ‘even so.’ If the Gospel has nothing as of right which it can claim, how is it ‘even so’ as the Temple? If the Priests of the Temple were sure of a tenth, and the Priests of the Gospel not of a hundredth or a thousandth part, or of any part at all, how were they provided ‘even so,’ as the Priests of the Temple? In these words lie the force of the argument and the pertinence of the comparison.

We are all influenced perhaps more by the practice of any duty, as exhibited in the lives of good men, than by any precept, however strong: let us then

notice some instances of the setting apart of the tenth of a person's increase, if not of his whole possessions, as a due service to his LORD.

About the year 1610 A. D., a fellow of Christ College, a Mr. Mede, was so sensible of the signal providence and goodness of Almighty GOD, that he solemnly vowed, and as religiously kept his vow, to lay aside every tenth shilling he should ever receive in the College, and to dedicate it to pious uses.

An interesting anecdote is also given of a Mr. William Whately, Vicar of Banbury, who had been at Christ College at the same time with Mede. He was renowned as a preacher; and on one occasion, when pressing works of charity upon his hearers, he exhorted them to make this experiment. When they had received good gain by traffic, &c., to take sixpence or fourpence in the pound, and put it in a purse by itself for works of piety. 'This,' he said, 'would take away all secret grudgings; for now they had laid so much aside for such a purpose, they would rather wish for an opportunity of disbursing it.'

After service, being visited by a neighbouring clergyman, they began to talk about the subject of his sermon, and he asked what proportion of income he thought everyone ought to devote to GOD. 'As for that,' he said, 'I am not to prescribe to others; but since here are none but very good friends, and we are all so private, I will tell you what hath been my own practice of late; and upon what occasion, you know, Sir, some years since, I was often beholden to you for the loan of £10 at a time. The truth

is, I could not bring the year about, though my receipts were not despicable, and I was not at all conscious to myself of any vain expense, or of improvidence. At length I began to examine my family—what relief was given to the poor; and although I was assured that this duty was not done niggardly, yet I could not be so satisfied, but resolved instantly to lay aside every *tenth* shilling of all my receipts for charitable uses. And now, to let you see how well I have thrived since that time—now, if you have occasion to need £100 or more, I have it ready for you.'

A Mr. John Parker, a merchant and citizen of London, observed the same rule, wishing, as he said, ‘to show his love and thankfulness unto GOD, both for raising him from a mean condition to that wealth he had, and especially for His spiritual goodness to him.’ This was his practice; and it was agreeable to his daily prayer, that as GOD increased him in wealth, so He would be pleased withal to increase in him humility and thankfulness, together with a constant perseverance in that lovely grace of charity. And what was the issue of all? GOD heard his prayers, and rewarded his alms; but He would first try him. For he reported thus of himself: For some three or four years after his resolution of setting apart the *tenth* of his gain for charitable purposes, he found no increase, nor did it appear that he thrived in the world; yet was he not thereby discouraged, but still gave bountifully and cheerfully. And this he did out of love to GOD, freely leaving prosperity in temporal things to GOD’s good pleasure, and con-

ceiving that GOD, in wisdom and goodness, prospered him not, thereby to try his sincerity to Him, and his charity to others. But from that time forward GOD abundantly advanced his temporal estate, so that, as he declared, he found by experience those gracious promises of His to be true, about the repayment of that with interest which is lent unto the LORD. (*Prov. xix. 17.*)

I cannot forbear from adding to these striking examples that of good Bishop Wilson. He had consecrated the tenth of his income to sacred uses, when that income had not exceeded £30 a year. Some years afterwards, the following sentiments appear in his Diary.

‘Easter Day, 1693. It having pleased GOD, of His mere bounty and goodness, to bless me with a temporal income far above my hopes and deserts, and having hitherto given a tenth part of my income to the poor, I do therefore purpose—and I thank GOD for putting it into my heart—from the 5th of August next, (after which time I hope to have paid my small debts,) to separate the *fifth* part of all my incomes, as I shall still receive them, for pious uses, and particularly for the poor.

‘Feb. 18th, 1718. To the glory of GOD I find, by constant experience, that GOD will be no man’s debtor. I find that I have enough, and to spare; so that, for the future, I dedicate *four-tenths* of my ecclesiastical incomes and rents to pious uses: and the good LORD accept His poor servant in this service, for Christ’s sake.’ Amen.

We may learn from these holy men this inference. No conscientious person is content to *trust* himself in the enjoyment of his possessions without some definite rule to guide him. And for this rule he searches Holy Scripture, and finding there that a tenth is laid down as the rightful portion, he determines that this shall be the *minimum* of what is set apart for God's service. He begins the practice as a duty, but he does not rest here; he finds such happiness in the act that he soon longs to exceed this sum. He discovers, that as a Christian he cannot be said to be truly just until he is generous, or truly generous until he is also just; that the rule for giving rightly regulates the rule for spending rightly; that the injunction, 'This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone,' should be the golden precept in regulating all temporal concerns—preserving us from forgetfulness of holy claims on the one hand, and injustice towards ourselves or our neighbours on the other.

The establishment of a rule in Christian Alms-giving also prevents any ostentation in the offering. Although it may be needful sometimes that it should be known to others, yet in no case can one who gives simply because he is thus performing a duty, give in order that he may be seen. The praise or dispraise of his fellow-men will not affect his actions, when they flow from a sense of *obedience* to Divine commands.

I have before remarked, that a Christian who bestows a tenth of his increase in Alms, will soon long to exceed this sum; and for this reason—

because he will discover that that which was commenced as a duty will ere long become to be esteemed as a *privilege*; and the desire which will thus be formed to exercise this privilege will influence the habits of his daily life. While he exerts himself to increase his worldly possessions—while he endeavours to save what he can by wise and careful expenditure—yet he will save, not for the purpose of accumulating wealth alone, to hoard it as a miser, (*i. e.* a miserable man,) but that he may have a larger portion to bestow in Alms. St. Chrysostom says, ‘A man is made rich, not by laying *by*, but by laying *out*;’ and he who thus apportions his money, realizes the truth of the quaint old saying, ‘What I spend, I get; what I save, I lose; what I give, I have.’

Nothing has a worse effect upon the character than perpetual calculation how we can *save* our money, *merely for the purpose of saving*; for it shuts the heart, and permits it not to expand towards kindly influences. Calculation to make money by any justifiable means in our power, that we may have the more to *bestow*, has quite a contrary effect; this enlarges and elevates the character, opens the heart, and imparts joy both to the receiver of good, and to him who is thus enabled to bestow it.

‘Bountifulness is a most fruitful garden, and mercifulness endureth for ever.’ (*Ecclesiasticus. xl. 17.*)

Let the young be taught the happiness of giving, and let their gifts to the poor be gained by their own exertions, or by some act of self-denial on their part, as a point of Christian duty. Let them not suppose that those only who have riches, and can

spare these riches, are called upon to ‘distribute’; but let them learn that *all* must ‘be merciful after their power’—that those who have little to bestow are ‘to do their diligence gladly to give of that little.’ Let them be warned, that a passing emotion of commiseration for distress, or a sudden glow of enthusiasm for some holy work, will not in themselves endure the force of the temptations which the world holds out to self-gratification and indulgence, but that an habitual *system*, of setting apart something for Christ’s poor, will prove to them through life a steady principle, preserving them from many worldly dangers; and at the same time, a blessing from Above will brighten their path, and cheer their steps through the long journey of life. And if to this admonition we add the sentiment of the saintly George Herbert, ‘I can never do enough for Him, Who has done so much for me, as to make me a Christian,’ we shall set the key-stone to the arch which will carry our loved ones over those shoals which beset their path—namely, the ‘pomps and vanities of this wicked world’—which, at their Baptism, we promised they should renounce.

The comfort also of following a *rule* of duty on this point, as in others, will be found in the power it possesses in mitigating the regrets of those whose means are limited while their hearts are large. It will prevent in them the rising of discontent, or the too eager desire for riches which have been withheld. He who seeth the inward springs of action will claim for the smallest gift the same honour he

bestowed upon her who shed the ‘precious ointment’ upon His sacred head. ‘She hath done what she could,’ were the words whereby He commended an action misjudged by those who saw not in it the inward desire to do honour to her LORD. Hence we learn that the blessing is apportioned not to the amount of the offering, but to the sincerity and true devotion which prompt the action. There is no room for vanity here. True Almsgiving is that of which it is said—‘The left hand knoweth not what the right hand doeth.’ Sufficient is it for us if GOD remembereth that which is done as an offering to Him. Sufficient is it for us if we recollect that the Poor form the treasury whereby we lay up our earthly goods that they may be resolved into heavenly riches.

An anecdote of the olden days of the Church’s history aptly illustrates some of these remarks. St. Lawrence was requested to give up the treasures of the Church at Rome, which were in his keeping as Archdeacon. He said, ‘Let me be sent back with wagons, in which they may be brought away.’ An order was given for as many wagons as he needed; and in proportion to the number of the carriages he required, so did the cupidity of his persecutors rise with the supposed amount of the spoil which they should possess. St. Lawrence filled the wagons with the Poor, and with them returned to the Heathen tribunal. ‘What means this?’ was the cry. He answered, ‘These are the “Treasures” of the Church.’

And here I may perhaps introduce with some

appropriateness an incident which occurred during the ministration of a Clergyman in a populous and wealthy town, but where, as is too often the case, the collections for charitable purposes were small, and evidently given with reluctance. A sermon was preached on one occasion, setting forth the claims of some local Charity, or some Church society, in which the Parish Priest spoke forcibly, as he often had before, upon the subject ; at the same time he told his congregation that he was grieved to find how little they valued the privilege of bestowing Alms ; but as this was the case, and as his words failed to teach them, he felt it to be his duty to deprive them of the privilege for a time, therefore that no collection would be made as usual after the sermon. This happily produced the desired effect : the consciences of many were touched, and ere many days had elapsed the applications at the Rectory to be permitted to give were numerous ; and never again were half-crowns and shillings miserably doled out where gold should have been freely and thankfully given.

‘ Give unto the Most High according as He hath enriched thee, and as thou hast gotten give with a cheerful eye. Thou shalt not appear empty before the LORD. In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance, and dedicate thy tithes with gladness. For the LORD recompenseth, and will give thee seven times as much.’ (*Eccl. xxxv. 10, 4, 9, 11.*)

And now let us review what was set forth at the commencement of this little book, upon that essential

qualification to the reception of any offering by Almighty GOD, namely, the *purity* of the sacrifice.

The first essential to true Thanksgiving we found to be the confession that all good things which we possess are gifts to us from Above; and the setting apart of the tenth of all our increase for holy uses, acknowledges this belief.

Our dues to the LORD being paid, we may now approach Him with the free-will offerings of a thankful heart, and thus fulfil the succeeding requirements of a pure sacrifice—namely, the duty of contentment and its accompanying desire to glorify our GOD, and to show forth His Praise both with our lips and in our lives. Each blessing which we receive, when unlooked for, each occasion for joy, or even for the true pleasures which visit us in our daily life, will now strike the chord of gratitude within our hearts and make them ring with praise; and to a heart thus affected, no greater joy can there be than to do honour to the Bestower of its happiness.

We are all too much inclined to receive good as a matter of course. For want of Christian thought how many blessings are overlooked—scarcely even understood as blessings, much less gratefully acknowledged. This is but human nature; we see that children soon learn to ask for what they want or desire to have, they do not need to be taught to do this; but instruction has to be given to them ere they learn to return thanks for kindness or for favours bestowed upon them. And we teach them this duty, not because we need their thanks, but

because it implants the feeling of gratitude within their hearts. And are we not all as children in God's sight? Do we not pray to Him to grant us His Mercies? And do we not too often neglect to thank Him for them when received? Let us be assured that the more we accustom ourselves to remember the daily pleasures of our lives, with a sense of Thankfulness to the Great Giver, the better it will be for individual characters. Such thoughts take off our minds from self-contemplation or self-glorification, and enable us also to render our *feelings* instrumental in showing forth God's Glory by turning them into occasions whereby we may add a free-will offering to the store which as a rule we set apart for Alms-giving. A joyful acknowledgement of Divine Love was felt of old to be a man's duty and delight; and we should hail in this self-seeking age any means whereby our thoughts may be lifted up from the cares which press us round, to the joy of giving Praise.

Let me assure those whose means are small, that this habit will replenish their too often empty Alms-purse, and enable them to lend a helping hand in assisting some good work, the accomplishment of which seemed at first far beyond their power. Even the poorest may contribute in this manner.

Let us suppose the case of Church-building in a poor district. Aid is given from societies established for the purpose; rich neighbours contribute their donations, but the poor look on and feel their helplessness to assist in so important a work. But if they would try and set aside something, *however*

small,—even a half-penny, whenever they felt a happiness or a pleasure had been sent to them, and do this habitually from a sense of dutiful thankfulness, the pennies would, sooner than might be expected, become sixpences and shillings, and these might in time change even into gold.

Then when these *true* Thank-offerings had been presented, and their Church rose before their eyes, would not they feel that the very stones of which it was built would speak of Praise to the Most High? In the beautiful language of the Prophet, (*Isaiah*, lx. 18.) ‘Her walls would speak of Salvation, and her gates of Praise.’ Nothing also rivets the affection of individuals to the Church more than the contributing to her maintenance.

Free-will offerings of Thankfulness for blessings received, are chains of attachment which nothing but relapse into self-willed forgetfulness of benefits can break.

A clever man who understood human nature said, ‘If you wish to make converts, do not give money to them, but take money from them.’ *The feeling that we have given attaches us to the object who receives our bounty.* But it is not this motive alone which should weigh with us. Rather let us remember that the Church herself desires to cherish in her children the emotion of devout gratitude, and has therefore appointed the Offertory as a part of her public service. We shall find this ancient and reverent mode of presenting the Alms of the congregation, far from deterring the people from giving by the frequency of its recurrence, has in practice quite a

contrary effect. The desire to give increases with the opportunities for giving. Experience has proved this. In almost every instance where a return to this holy usage has been established, a great increase in the funds for Church purposes has been the result. I will name one. A Clergyman thus writes—‘ We had formerly the greatest difficulty to raise from £20 to £24 for the necessary expenses of the Church. We commenced the system of a weekly Offertory in September, and at the end of twelve months there has been received the sum of £129 6s. I may also state that a very large proportion of this sum has been contributed in fourpenny and three-penny pieces, and even in pennies and half-pennies. The people have learned to consider it a privilege to give in this manner.’

Why, also, are Alms-boxes appointed as part of the Church’s requirements? (The 84th Canon prescribes ‘A Chest for Alms in every Church.’) Are they always to be passed by unheeded? Is this receptacle for the Thank-offerings of a Christian congregation to be disregarded? Surely it ought not so to be, and will not when a just sense of Christian obligations is formed within us.

Again, allow me to draw your attention to some notable instances of Thank-offerings from grateful hearts; and these shall be taken from Churchmen of the present day. A carpenter when employed in building a Church, made a resolution that he would take only out of his payments what was absolutely required for his food and raiment, and that he would give the rest to GOD. When the Church was

finished, he brought the savings, £8, and gladly poured them into the Treasury of the LORD. This occurred in the Diocese of Colombia.

A certain district in Cornwall, was a few years ago in a deplorable condition ; ignorance and wickedness prevailed. At last the Bishop appointed a zealous and judicious Clergyman to labour amongst the benighted people, who were chiefly miners. On his arrival, he became disheartened by the hopelessness of his work, and wrote to the Bishop, saying he felt that he must give up the cure ; but in reply he received an injunction to remain and labour still more in the LORD'S vineyard. On this he set himself again to work, steadfastly and faithfully, and in a few years had the delight of receiving his reward. Hitherto the Parish had been Churchless, Service being held in the School-room ; but now the people were eager to have the blessing of a Church, and most eager to give of their hard-earned wages funds for the purpose. All the materials were brought to the ground free of expense ; farmers lending their carts, and labourers giving their time ; all seemed to think they could not do enough to show their thankfulness for blessings received—the blessings which at one time had been despised by them. All was at last completed ; and the Parish is now known in the Diocese as one where the Services of the Church are regularly and reverently attended, and where excellent Church feeling prevails.

Who also has not heard of an eminent and successful Merchant who has, as a grateful acknowledgement for GOD's blessing on his endeavours, bestowed

immense sums for the benefit of his fellow-townsmen in various ways? the City of London having received from him the munificent sum of £150,000 for improving the dwellings of the poor.

We have also recently seen the most grateful sight of three new Churches consecrated in one week, which have all been built and endowed, provided also with Parsonage-houses and Schools, by one noble in mind as well as in title, who is said to have expended nearly a million for the good of the Church, and to have erected ten Churches on his various estates.

Then, again, a Cathedral, which (grievous to acknowledge) had fallen into decay, and which was fast crumbling into utter ruin, has been saved and restored into even more than pristine beauty by the almost unheard-of gift of *one* individual—a successful man of business in the City of Dublin, and who has thus bestowed his acquired wealth, even £150,000, as a Thank-offering to Almighty God.

Neither must we forget the endowment of two Bishoprics by a Lady, rich in this world's goods, but still more to be noted as rich in good works, and in the exercise of all Christian graces.

These, and *many* others, who have thus exercised the privileges accorded to the rich, have doubtless experienced also the rich man's blessing—'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (*Acts*, xx. 35.)

It is by the exercise of Gratitude that we mark ourselves as Christians. Heathen natures are moved by fear; that is the motive power which regulates

their devotional acts; they strive to propitiate their Divinities by sacrifices and offerings, hoping thus to avert their wrath, and so save themselves from depending calamities; for power is associated in the Heathen mind with vengeance. But Christian faith reveals an Almighty Ruler, Who manifests His Power ‘most chiefly in showing mercy and pity,’ and Who requires from His subjects, as honour due unto Him for these ‘inestimable benefits,’ the sacrifice of Thanks and Praise. ‘Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me.’ (*Psalm l. 23.*) Therefore it is that our characters are ennobled by the exercise of gratitude; real, true, heartfelt thanks bind more closely the cords of Love which unite Earth to Heaven, and the reality of these feelings produces also reality in our life. We press on to do some *real* work of good to our fellow-men, as a means of honouring our Father which is in Heaven; and we remember also that idleness or carelessness does not mean only doing nothing, but that it is also the *neglect of returning Thanks to the Giver for the ‘Giver’s Gifts.’*

St. Chrysostom observes, ‘To know the art of Alms is greater than to be crowned with the diadem of kings.’

Let us, then, give our hearts to this our ‘Sacrifice of Praise,’ and we shall find ways and means in abundance to make the duty both easy, profitable, and useful.

The widow’s ‘cruse of oil’ failed not as long as she had empty vessels into which to pour her supplies; her ‘barrel of meal’ wasted not as long as

she expended it in supplying the necessities of the LORD's Prophet. And let it not be said that any Christian heart has less faith than that of the Israelite. Rather in our Christian *freedom* let us exceed the measure which was established in their case by the requirements of the Law.

I am well aware that my abilities to speak on this important duty are small, but they are sincere; and as even a Cottage flower can give honey to the bee who searches in sincerity for true riches to carry to the hive, while the most precious flower in a Prince's garden yields nothing to the butterfly who cares not for future stores, so do I feel that the result of this endeavour depends more upon the diligence of the peruser than upon the power of the writer. I can but humbly trust that he who reads these pages with a hearty desire to gather therefrom some useful hint, may not close them without a sense of increasing Thankfulness to the Great Giver of all good things resting in his soul.

If so, *He* will Himself instruct us how we can best show forth His Glory, by offering unto His Divine Majesty such a 'Sacrifice of Praise' as may prove good and acceptable unto Him, both as the fruit of our bounden duty, and as the incense of an endless Thanksgiving for never-ending Mercies.

'WHEN YE GLORIFY THE LORD, EXALT HIM AS MUCH AS YE CAN; FOR EVEN YET WILL HE FAR EXCEED: AND WHEN YE EXALT HIM, PUT FORTH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND BE NOT WEARY, FOR YE CAN NEVER GO FAR ENOUGH.'

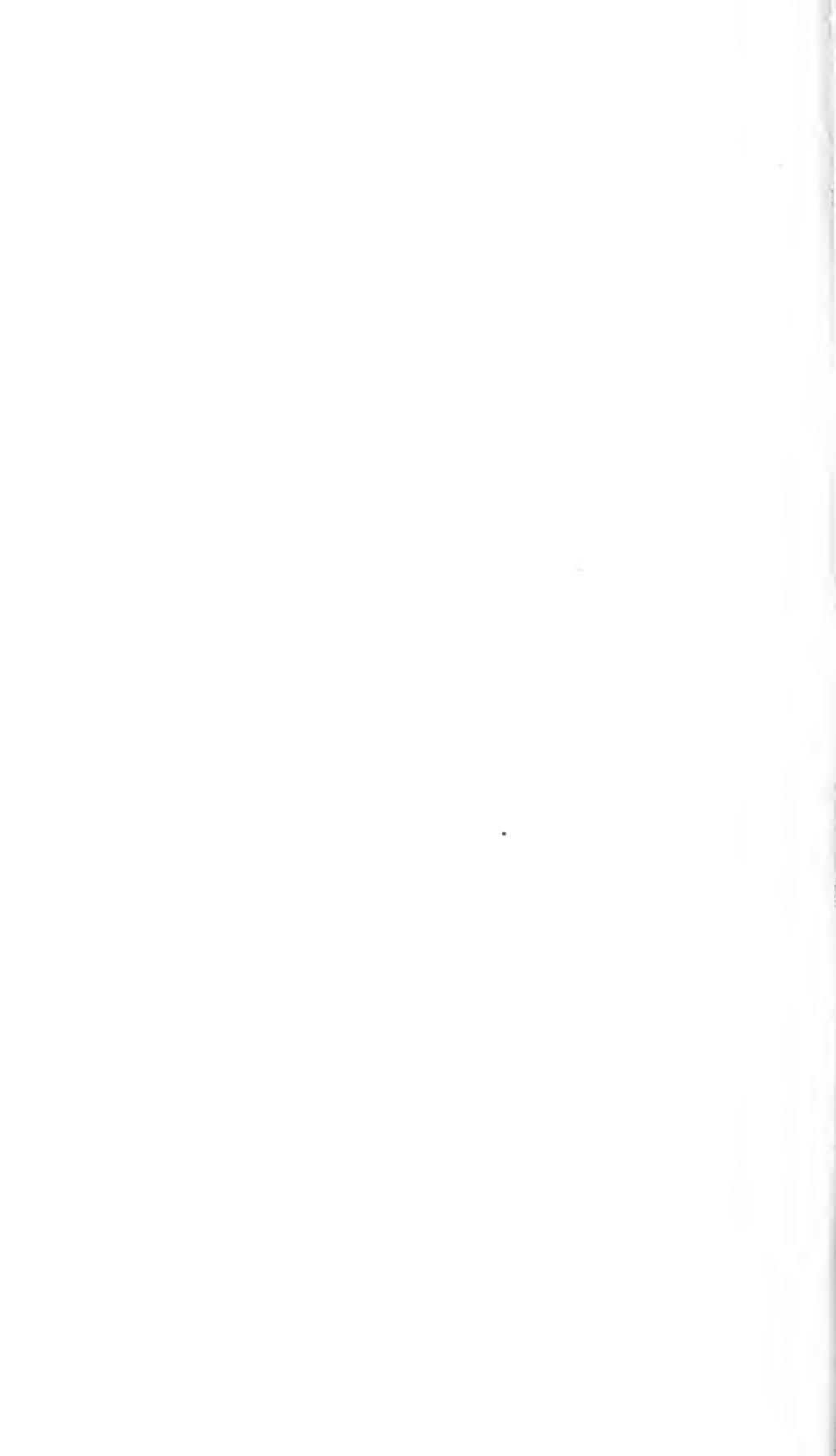
(*Ecclus. XLIII. 30.*)

Not *only* with our hymns of joy,
Our notes of praise, and songs of adoration,
 Let us praise God,
But with the free-will offerings from our stores ;
Those stores and treasures which the world calls gold—
The gold which perishes, the silver which enriches not,
 Until it be sanctified by sacrifice.

Beware of saying with the worldly wise,
'*My* power and *my* might hath gotten me this wealth !'
But learn with godly men to look toward the Great Giver,
 And from His gifts bestow.

For He hath said, 'Freely have ye received,'
Therefore shall ye 'freely give.' And He hath also added,
In His all-gracious mercy, 'Inasmuch as *this* ye do unto My
brethren,
 Ye do it unto Me.'

Then, as thine own blessings visit thee—those gifts
From Him Who loves thee with Almighty love—let *them*
Call forth thine alms, as incense from a grateful heart ;
And humbly ask Him to accept from thee
 A Sacrifice of Praise.



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